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ABSTRACT

In the belief that questions about peace, justice, freedom, and security are vital to civic education, the United States Institute of Peace established the National Peace Essay Contest, which is designed to promote discussion of international peace and conflict resolution, complement existing curricula, and strengthen students' research, writing, and reasoning skills. This teaching guide provides five lessons that will help students fulfill certain educational objectives. Lesson 1 acquaints the students with the essay question on "Preventing Violent International Conflict," presenting concepts used in the essay question with exercises designed to activate student understanding. Lesson 2 presents two case studies with background information and primary sources to illustrate success and failure in preventing violent international conflict. Teachers can use this lesson to explain how to use primary source materials as evidence to support or refute a thesis statement. Lesson 3 reinforces the analytical skills developed in the previous lesson through small group and class discussions. The essay question is reintroduced in lesson 4, allowing class members to compose sample essays integrating the concepts and case study materials. Lesson 5 prepares students to write individual essays. (BT)

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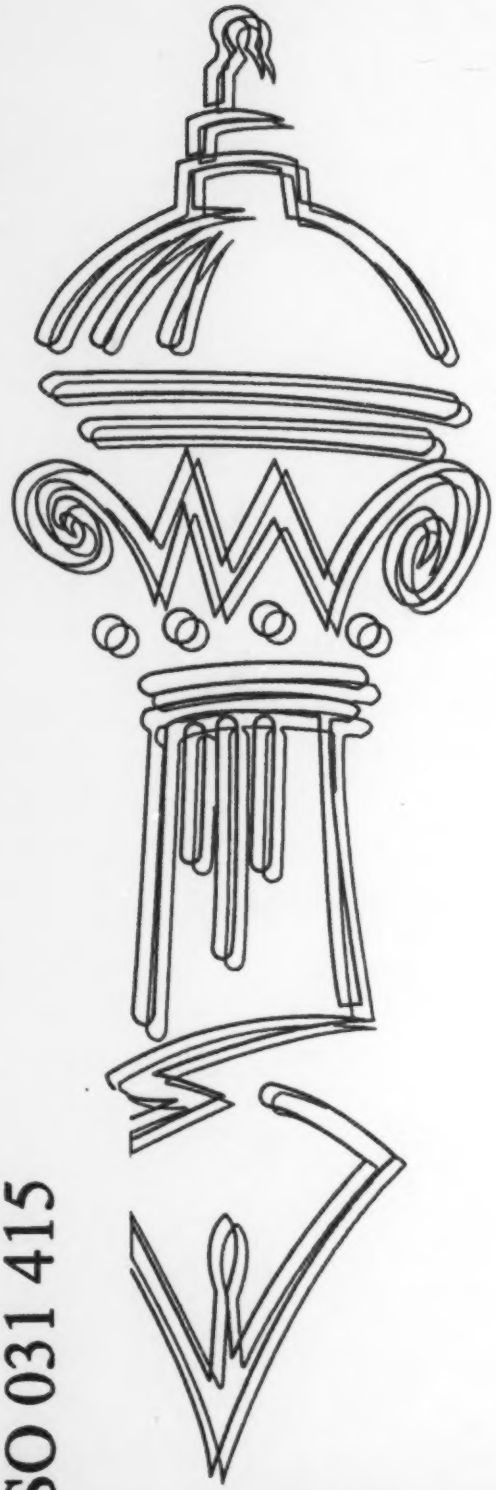

Teaching Guide

on Preventing Violent International Conflict

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United States Institute of Peace

Essay Question Preventing Violent International Conflict

Most conflicts in the world do not materialize overnight. They build up over a long period of time and, in most cases, there is time for diplomats and mediators to attempt to prevent conflicts before they erupt and become violent crises.

Unlike efforts which seek to defuse crises once they have erupted, conflict prevention (or "preventive diplomacy") approaches international political problems in their pre-violent stages, usually through political, economic, or military initiatives. These preventive measures attempt to keep low-level, or long-festering, disputes from escalating into costly confrontations involving armed violence.

Preventive diplomacy requires officials to be aware of signs of emerging conflict in the same way that a doctor monitors patients for early symptoms of emerging health problems. Just as a doctor can prescribe preventive medical treatment, diplomats can employ conflict prevention measures to keep specific international problems from becoming violent crises. The goal of conflict prevention is not to manage current violent conflicts that have already erupted but to keep these armed conflicts from developing in the first place. Measures to prevent conflict may be undertaken by an individual government such as the United States, by a coalition of several countries, or by international organizations, including the United Nations.

There are many tools officials can use to discourage conflicts from developing or worsening into violence. These tools include: early warning systems to alert disputants of military movements or other pre-violent hostile activities; economic assistance or trade as incentives for peaceful actions; fact-finding missions to clarify disputed issues; citizen exchanges (students or scientists, for example) to build trust; mediation between disputants; hot-lines for quick communications between leaders; preventive deployments of peacekeepers in demilitarized zones to create a buffer between hostile parties; and certain coercive measures such as arms embargoes or diplomatic and economic sanctions designed to build incentives for restraint.

In a 1,500-word essay:

- Select two instances in which international organizations or national governments undertook preventive measures in an effort to head off a possible violent international crisis. The two instances should include one example of successful prevention and one example of failed prevention. At least one of the two cases should be post–World War II.
- Briefly describe the two disputes, their root sources, and the efforts made to prevent escalation into violent conflicts.
- Analyze whether or not the preventive measures were successful. If they were successful, describe the elements that made the preventive action effective. If the measures were unsuccessful, explain the factors that contributed to the failure.
- Conclude your essay by analyzing the factors that would make preventive action commonly practiced and more effective in the future.

Introduction

The United States depends on knowledgeable and thoughtful students—the next generation of leaders—to build peace with freedom and justice among nations and peoples. In the belief that questions about peace, justice, freedom, and security are vital to civic education, the United States Institute of Peace established the National Peace Essay Contest. The contest is designed to promote discussion of international peace and conflict resolution, complement existing curricula, and strengthen students' research, writing, and reasoning skills. To further support these goals, this teaching guide on the essay question "Preventing Violent International Conflict" has been developed by the United States Institute of Peace.

The objective of this guide is to provide lessons aimed at helping students to:

- develop an understanding of principal concepts regarding conflict and conflict prevention and apply them to the essay question
- formulate thesis statements to inform the structure of the essay
- use primary source materials in addition to secondary sources
- reinforce analytical writing skills in sample case studies
- build student confidence in writing well-constructed essays on the contest topic

This guide will fulfill these objectives through five suggested lessons.

Lesson I acquaints the students with the essay question, presenting concepts used in the essay question with exercises designed to activate student understanding.

Lesson II presents two case studies with background information and primary sources to illustrate success and failure in preventing violent international conflict. Teachers can use this lesson to explain how to use primary source materials as evidence to support or refute a thesis statement.

Lesson III reinforces the analytical skills developed in the previous lesson through small group and class discussions.

The essay question is reintroduced in **Lesson IV**, allowing class members to compose sample essays integrating the concepts and case study materials.

Finally, **Lesson V** prepares students to write individual essays on "Preventing Violent International Conflict."

Lesson 1 Concept Development

Lesson 1 will take approximately two class periods. Have the students read the essay question, "Preventing Violent International Conflict," and list any questions students have pertaining to concepts, themes, or tools contained in the essay question.

The objective of this lesson is for students to acquire an active understanding of key concepts beyond rote memorization of definitions. Victor Rentel developed a five-step system for concept development that will be adapted to the key concepts in the essay question.[1] Students will learn to *label, compare and contrast, categorize, and apply* information inherent in each concept to the particular context in which the concept is used in individual essays. To reinforce key concepts and integrate them successfully into essay composition, students will apply various approaches to thoroughly understand each concept. The following outline of these approaches uses the concept "balance of power" as an example.

1. *Establish a label for the concept.* Connect the concept with particular word associations for clarity and understanding. For example, balance of power, defined as a "relatively equal distribution of military power between states, allowing no single state or coalition of states to dominate the others," can be associated with the European power system resulting from the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), called the Concert of Europe.
2. *Emphasize attributes of the concept.* Identify the characteristics of a concept that make it similar to or different from other concepts. To develop attributes of a balance of power, one might compare and contrast the characteristics of the Concert of Europe with those of the hegemonic system of Napoleonic Europe.
3. *Provide both positive and negative examples of the concept.* Through examples and counter-examples, discuss state systems that represent a balance of power or an imbalance of power (such as a state of chaos or hegemony), and explain how certain historical and contemporary alliances represent positive and negative examples of the concept.
4. *Discover the essence of the concept by categorizing it and relating it to other concepts.* By categorizing various forms of balance of power arrangements, link the concept to collective security systems and coalitions, and to other concepts mentioned in this lesson or brought up by students.
5. *Apply the concept to historical topics or current issues.* Once the students understand the key concepts in the essay question, integrate each concept into issues discussed in class. For example, did the balance of power agreed upon at the Congress of Vienna ensure peace in Europe (with only isolated bilateral conflicts) between 1815 and 1914? If so, why did it fail in 1914?

1. Betty Roe, Barbara Stoodt, and Paul Burns, *The Content Areas* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 46.

Key Concepts

The following concepts are taken from the essay question "Preventing Violent International Conflict" and are intended to give the students a better understanding of the topic.

Power: The ability to influence or control the behavior of others, events, outcomes, or the rules of the game. Strength, resources, leadership, and moral persuasion are attributes necessary to exercise power.

- *Balance of Power:* A relatively equal distribution of military power between states, allowing no single state or coalition of states to dominate the others.
- *Coalition:* A group of states that cooperate with each other on a short-term basis to achieve a common goal or work against a common threat.
- *Hegemony:* The possession by one state of a preponderance of military and economic power in the international system. This state can create and enforce rules and impose its will on other states.
- *Alliance Systems:* A formal commitment between states to coordinate a political or military response against a specific enemy or specific contingencies.

Low-level Disputes: Conflicts between independent political units in which the violence is below the threshold of all-out military combat but above peaceful competition between states.

Escalation: An increase of military or political efforts to achieve one's goals by raising the stakes and expanding the existing or perceived limits of the conflict, often making it harder to control any resulting violence.

Violent International Conflict (War): A major armed conflict between organized military forces of independent political units to achieve political advantage over other combatants.

Preventive Diplomacy: Measures taken to keep low-level or long-festering disputes from escalating into significant violence between parties and to limit the spread of violence if it does occur.

- *Preventive Measures:* Specific actions taken to keep disputes from arising or escalating.
- *Coercive Measures:* The use of threats or limited force to compel an adversary to take a course of action it might not otherwise take.
- *Deterrence:* The use of threats or limited force to dissuade a state from taking a particular course of action.
- *International Organizations:* Intergovernmental structures that develop cooperative activities among states and create

agreed rules, norms, and procedures for specific state behavior.

- *Diplomacy (Diplomats):* The management of international relations in general and, specifically, the conduct of relations between states through communication and negotiation, as well as promises, threats, and force.
- *Mediation (Mediators):* The use of an outside party to help disputants to resolve differences without violence by facilitating communication, re-framing the discussion, or offering incentives or disincentives to negotiate or come to agreement.

Preventive Measures

- *Early Warning System:* A set of indicators based on information and intelligence to help identify where and when the most harmful conflicts and crises might occur.
- *Hot-line:* A direct and open communications link between heads of state in order to facilitate fast communication during emergencies or crises.
- *Economic Assistance:* Bilateral or multilateral aid to provide resources for economic development, hasten economic recovery or transformation, or supply basic humanitarian needs.
- *Economic Sanctions:* The limitation or interruption of economic relations between countries to bring about a change in the policies of the target country.
- *Diplomatic Sanctions:* Actions such as denial of visas, withholding of political support, and lessening of military commitments, taken by governments against other states in order to bring about a change in the policies of the target country.
- *Fact-finding Mission:* Representatives of international organizations dispatched to an area of conflict to establish the facts and root causes of the conflict in order to assist with conflict prevention.

Preventive Deployment: Deployment in a conflict area of military or police personnel representing the United Nations or a regional organization such as NATO in order to prevent an outbreak of violence.

- *Peacekeeping (Peacekeepers):* The use of military forces under United Nations or regional organization auspices to function as a buffer between disputants to prevent fighting or enforce a cease-fire.
- *Demilitarized Zone:* An area in which parties to a conflict agree after a cease-fire that military weapons and personnel will not be permitted, in particular as a means to separate potential belligerents or create a buffer zone that will make attack less likely by a neighboring country.

Collaborative Activity to Develop Conceptual Comprehension

- Divide students into pairs or into groups of four or five to research selected concepts and tools (one to three suggested) from the list of key concepts. Each group member has a clearly defined concept research role and is individually accountable both to the group and the entire class. Student facilitators are elected or selected for each group to keep group members on task and to monitor group progress.
- Direct the student groups to investigate assigned concepts and integrate at least three of the five approaches suggested by Rentel, using the balance of power example to give students a model for their analyses.
- Students analyze their findings within the small group, with each student performing a definite task. For example, particular students might serve as "experts" on particular concepts and bring that information to the group; or the group may want to research and analyze their assigned concepts collectively. Group members then vigorously discuss the concepts and arrive at a group consensus.
- Each small group chooses a representative to present group findings on black/whiteboard. Students can use charts, Venn diagrams, or other visual or verbal representations to present their findings.

The entire class discusses connections among concepts, starting with information students already know and linking that prior knowledge to what they have learned. At the end of the lesson, have the students take out their initial list of questions pertaining to the essay topic and compare those questions with their current understanding of the essay topic.

Lesson II Building Analytical Skills through Sample Essays

Lesson II will take two class periods, and requires an overnight homework assignment. Now that the students have a better understanding of the concepts and tools found in the essay question, apply this new understanding to writing analytical sample essays. Present the essay question and apply it to two historical case studies: Poland in 1815 and Czechoslovakia in 1938. (Background materials and primary source documents are provided for teacher and student use at www.usip.org/et.html or can be requested by calling 202-429-3846.)

Divide the class into two groups. One group will write an analytical essay that illustrates *success* in preventing violent international conflict: the case of Poland in 1815. The other group will write an analytical essay that illustrates *failure* in preventing violent international conflict: the case of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Each essay should have a clear thesis, a statement of the problem and efforts made to prevent violent conflict, a concise presentation of the evidence as found in the primary source documents, an original analysis explaining why peaceful preventive measures were successful or unsuccessful, suggestions of efforts that might have been successful, and concluding remarks.

Direct the students to read "What Is an Essay?" in the guidebook. At this point, the students should remain focused on primary source documents. Do not allow the students to conduct any additional research on the topic they are assigned. Students may look up terms they do not understand (for example, Third Reich) in the glossary of a history book, but beyond term clarification, no other materials should be used in this exercise. Students should write the essays individually, preferably as a homework assignment. The essays should be no longer than two pages. The emphasis here is on analytical writing, not description.

Case Studies

Success in Preventing Violent International Conflict: Poland, 1815

Have selected students read the essay question and apply it to the case study of Poland. Hand out background information and primary source documents (materials are available at www.usip.org/et.html). Make sure students include the following concepts and tools when writing their analytical essays.

- Balance of Power
- Hegemony
- Alliance System
- Diplomacy
- Coalition
- Collective Security

Failure to Prevent Violent International Conflict: Czechoslovakia, 1938

Have selected students read the essay question and apply it to the case study of Czechoslovakia. Hand out the background materials and primary source documents (materials are available at www.usip.org/et.html). Make sure the students include the following concepts and tools in their essays.

- Balance of Power
- Hegemony
- Diplomacy
- Mediation
- Diplomatic Sanctions
- Fact-finding Mission
- Preventive Measures
- Coercive Measures

Lesson III Group Discussions of Analytical Essays

Lesson III builds on the analytical skills developed in Lesson II by focusing on small group class discussions. Group discussions will last one to two class periods.

- After the students have completed their assigned essays on Poland, 1815, and Czechoslovakia, 1938, divide them into small groups of two, four, or six, with half the members of each group having done Poland, the other half, Czechoslovakia.
- Have the students read and discuss thesis statements with their peers, asking questions such as why they chose particular pieces of evidence to support their thesis statements. Have the students discuss the analytical aspects of their essays, sharing original ideas. The purpose here is to illustrate the discipline of the thesis statement and primary source evidence, but also to reward original analysis. Analysis must, however, be based on evidence. Have students make the leap from primary sources to analysis without depending on pre-digested secondary source analyses to do the hard work of thinking through questions and answering them.
- In the course of small group discussions, students should discuss their choices of concepts, noting the use of some of the same concepts in each case study.
- Make sure students understand how evidence and concepts are used to make each case, and how one learns from failures in thinking about future successes.
- Gather the students together as an entire class and discuss the two essays, constructing on the black/whiteboard for each case study a class thesis statement, suggestions of the strongest evidence, and collective analyses. Emphasize the importance of these elements in writing the National Peace Essay Contest essay, and reward original thinking.
- The notes collected during this class discussion should be recorded and distributed to class members for use in Lesson IV of this guide.

Lesson IV Writing a Sample Essay

Lesson IV revisits the essay question "Preventing Violent International Conflict," allowing students to compose sample essays and integrate concepts and case study materials. The lesson will take one to two class periods in either a full-class or small-group arrangement.

Now that the students have reviewed concepts and tools crucial for understanding the essay question, and have written and discussed case studies illustrating the success and failure of preventive diplomacy, they are ready to re-examine the essay question and write a sample outline and essay with the case study information already presented and analyzed.

- To participate in this lesson, the students should have their initial notes after they read the essay question, their case study essay, and a copy of the collective notes assembled by teacher and students in discussions of the sample case study essays.
- Diagram the essay question on the blackboard, with student input. The objective here is to make sure the essay question is understood and to build student confidence in writing the essay.
- Re-read with the class the first two paragraphs of the essay question. Use the examples of Poland and Czechoslovakia to address the issues discussed. Remind the students of the partitions of Poland and the rights allotted the Poles by Napoleon. What were the objectives of Congress representatives? What problems were festering in the Polish issues, and how did the diplomats approach these problems? Do the same in the discussion of Czechoslovakia, discussing the Versailles Treaty and the notion of "self-determination" to understand the emergence of the Czech crisis. This should be a quick discussion, as the students already possess this information. The objective here is to apply already-known information to the essay question.
- Discuss the second two paragraphs of the essay question, using the knowledge accrued through the study of concept development in Lesson I. The students should feel confident in discussing the terms and should be able to categorize the concepts and tools useful to writing the essay.
- Develop a sample outline of an essay, using the case studies of Poland, 1815, and Czechoslovakia, 1938. Have the class develop a thesis statement. The presentation of the evidence should be straightforward. The emphasis here is the value of primary source documentation. The students should have a vigorous discussion of the analytical features of the essay. Encourage creativity in thinking, while reminding students of the importance of linking creative analysis to evidence.

Lesson V Choosing an Essay Topic

Lesson V is the starting point for students to write individual essays. The time frame for this lesson can be adapted to fit your course schedule. The objective of this lesson is to prepare students to write individual essays and encourage original thought and analysis.

- As a homework assignment, have the students make a list of case study topics they might choose to pursue when writing the individual essay. Students should think creatively and can use cases and tools that are not detailed in the essay question. Instruct the students to list the concepts and tools relevant to each case study as they note *why* they have chosen each case study. *Keep in mind that one example of preventive action must be a success, one a failure, and one of the two cases must be post–World War II.*
- Discuss student case study choices in class, emphasizing student-proposed concepts and tools to be integrated into the research and outline of the question.
- Guide students to bibliographic sources, including primary source materials. Refer to the United States Institute of Peace web site (www.usip.org/et.html) for information, as well as compilations of primary source materials. The U.S. Department of State series *Current Documents* and *American Foreign Policy*, as well as the Department of State's *Bulletin*, are useful starting points.

United States Institute of Peace

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